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ABSTRACT

The Carpinteria school district in California has developed a model preschool program to bring Spanish-dominant preschool children up to a level of readiness for school that compares favorably with that of English-speaking children in the same community. That goal is achieved by developing skills in four major areas: Spanish language, cognition, successful learning strategies, and self-concept. The model emphasizes first-language development and language separation to allow full development of those skills. Evaluation of program outcomes through student achievement measures revealed that the Spanish-dominant children in the program exceeded the academic norms established by the English-language population and scored higher than Spanish-speaking nonparticipants in oral English proficiency. The students' progress in kindergarten and first grade, in which the home-language approach was also adopted, was also found to exceed expectations generally. Statistical data are included. (MSE)

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A SPANISH-LANGUAGE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

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Carpinteria Unified
School District

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CARPINTERIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Purpose of the Program

The major goal of the instructional approach of the project is to bring Spanish dominant preschool children entering kindergarten up to a level of readiness for school which compares favorably with the level attained by the English-speaking children in the community of Carpinteria.

This goal is achieved by developing skills in four major areas for the project participants. They are:

1. Developing oral language skills in Spanish to as high a degree as possible;

2. Developing cognitive and developmental skills associated with preschool curriculum;

3. Equipping each child with a repertoire of successful learning strategies with an emphasis on organizational skills;

4. Establishing a healthy self-concept by providing a positive social and emotional environment.

The project model emphasizes first language development to acquire the skills listed. This is based on the findings of Benjamin Bloom, University of Chicago, and on the work of Jim Cummins, University of Alberta, Canada. According to Bloom, in regard to academic achievement, at least one-third of the development of a child by the age of eighteen years has taken place prior to the child's entrance into the first grade of school. Furthermore, Bloom notes that the more able students in schools are those who demonstrate a high level of verbal ability in cognitive situations. Cummins' research indicates that a high degree of first language ability is necessary for optimum second language learning. The implication is that the development of language in children, the first language according to Cummins, is crucial to success in school, and should be in place before entry into first grade.

Program Treatment

A continuum of preschool skills designed by the project staff is used to implement the four major areas on which the project concentrates to bring project participants to a state of school readiness. The continuum includes activities that develop social and emotional goals; intellectual, cognitive, and communication goals; and physical development, health, and safety goals. The classroom is organized to include centers for blocks, games, math,

library and language, science, listening-viewing, arts and crafts, and a play house. A typical day's instruction is as follows:

Daily Schedule

8:30 - 8:35	Greeting "Buenos dias" children are all together in a large group.
8:35 - 9:00	Large group concept time (12 children, 2 adults). Half the class is in the large group area. Concepts include: language, colors, shapes, prepositions. Small groups. The other half of the class is divided into three small groups (four children to one adult). Small groups work on concepts discussed in large group plus other skills, i.e., cutting, copying, listening, remembering.
9:00 - 9:30	Groups trade places with one another. Children who were in small groups now go to the large group area, and the other children go to their small groups.
9:30 - 9:55	Outdoor play on kindergarten playground.
9:55 - 10:00	Bathrooms
10:00 - 10:20	Snack Four tables - snack time is an important time for language development.
10:20 - 10:30	Library time Children sit with teachers and rest and look at books quietly.
10:30 - 11:10	Free choice activities Small books, puzzles, art, dramatic play (i.e., house play), manipulative tasks (cutting, pasting, playdough), patio (water or sand play, large blocks, easels). Children choose the activities they want to participate in and move throughout the room freely.
11:10 - 11:15	Clean up
11:15 - 11:40	Story; music

All activities are developed in Spanish and presented with a multicultural emphasis and utilization of the cultural heritage of the students.

Toward the end of the school year, at least by April, a regular English language time is incorporated into the students' program. Lessons include:

- Total physical response activities
- Listening activities such as stories, music, directions
- Learning to sing songs, recite rhymes, games
- Viewing films, filmstrips
- Opening types of activities

Opportunities for natural exposure to English are provided throughout the year. For example, during recreational times, the Spanish dominant children mix with English dominant children on the playground. Activities for natural exposure to English also include:

- Field trips to the community (fire stations, etc.)
- Integrated play activity with kindergarteners
- Coordinated visits to English-speaking preschool programs

Experience has demonstrated that children who enter school without a firm grasp of Spanish tend to mix the first language with the second language, English. There is therefore an emphasis on keeping languages separate to develop an awareness within the students of the appropriate usage of each language and to avoid the mixing of both. This approach complements the existing kindergarten through grade six bilingual programs in the district: from kindergarten through grade two, there is cognitive basic skills development in the students' first language; in grades three and four, there is a transference and extension of the cognitive basic skills into the second language; and in grades five and six, students are exited into a regular program in the second language.

Although the prime goal for the project participants is to increase their intellectual capacity to learn by developing the first language to as high a degree as possible, a facility to acquire English also results from the instructional approach. This has been demonstrated by previous project participants.

Program Outcomes

An evaluation of program outcomes was conducted to measure student progress in school readiness, academic skills in language and math, and oral English proficiency.

Instrumentation--School Readiness Inventory. The SRI is a criterion-referenced test designed to assess a child's readiness for school in the areas of fine motor abilities, attending skills, and concept development. The SRI is administered in either Spanish or English

depending on the student's language dominance. The Carpinteria School District has used the SRI for the past 12 years.

El Circo. El Circo is standardized, norm-referenced achievement test which assesses student skills in language and math.

Bilingual Syntax Measure. The BSM is a state-designated instrument which assesses oral English proficiency.

The sample. In addition to students who participated in the Carpinteria Spanish language preschool, three other groups of students were identified for comparison purposes.

1. Spanish dominant students attending any other preschool
2. Spanish dominant students who did not attend preschool
3. English dominant students

Findings

School readiness. The results of the School Readiness Inventory displayed in Table 1 clearly show that Spanish dominant students who do not attend preschool or who attend a preschool where instruction is usually provided in English do not enter kindergarten with the same level of readiness skills as English dominant students. However, the readiness skills of the 22 Spanish dominant students who entered kindergarten in the fall of 1982 after one year of preschool instruction in Spanish almost equal the English dominant students' mean score.

TABLE 1

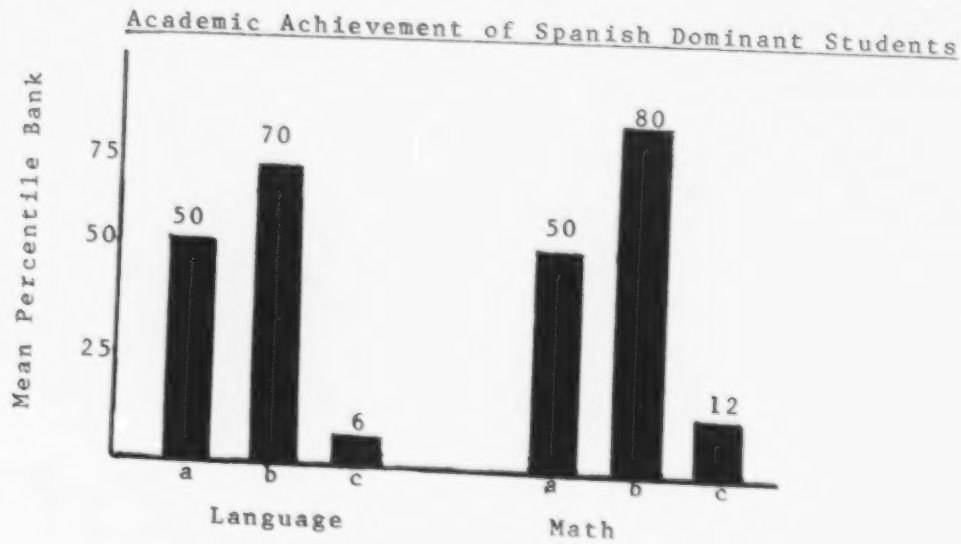
School Readiness of Kindergarten Children

Students	SRI Score	N	SD
Spanish dominant, not attending preschool	12.1	43	*
Spanish dominant, English preschool	14.8	59	*
Spanish dominant, Spanish preschool	21.6	22	*
English dominant	23.0	505	5.9

*Not computed

Academic achievement. Spanish dominant students' academic skills in language arts and mathematics in Spanish were assessed using the El Circo test. Results, displayed in Figure 1, clearly show that the students who participated in the Spanish language preschool program exceeded expectations established by the norming population. Spanish dominant students who participated in other preschool programs where English was the primary language of instruction remain mired in the first quartile.

FIGURE 1



a. Norming Group
b. Spanish Preschool, June 1982 (N=22)
c. Other Preschool, June 1982 (N=12)

Oral English proficiency. The oral English proficiency of all students whose home language was Spanish was assessed upon enrollment in kindergarter using the Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM).

Prior to the fall of 1982, 42 percent of the Spanish dominant s students entering kindergarten in Carpinteria scored at or above Level 3 (survival English) on the BSM. In the fall of 1982, 76 percent of the Spanish dominant students who had participated in the Spanish language preschool program scored at or above Level 3, while only 35 percent of the remaining Spanish dominant students reached that level.

Discussion

The program results in the areas of school readiness and academic achievement are not surprising. Students who are instructed in the language with which they are most familiar (in this case, Spanish) will develop academic skills and concepts more rapidly than if they were instructed in another language.

The improved oral English proficiency of the project students is somewhat surprising, however, since project participants received almost all of their instruction in Spanish. A possible explanation is suggested by Steven Krashen who states that second language acquisition is dependent on appropriate exposure to comprehensible second language input--language that the student can understand. One way that input becomes comprehensible to students is when the second language input deals with topics familiar to the students. In the case of the children who participated in the Spanish language preschool program, it seems possible that their improved conceptual knowledge allowed them to understand more of the English they were exposed to outside school.

POSTSCRIPT (June, 1985)

Here is an update of statistics gathered at the Early Childhood Learning Center (Canalino School) where all K-students in the Carpinteria Unified School District attend. The Canalino Title VII preschool program has started an upward trend in improved achievement at those levels for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students whose home language is Spanish.

In kindergarten, especially, one can see in the Tables tremendous incline in test scores since 1982 on the California Achievement Test (CAT). The May 1982 testing was of our first preschool group to enter kindergarten. The results were disappointing as the tables and graph show. The first group, however, had an abbreviated preschool program of only a half-year's instruction. We expected a sharp upturn the following year in May 1983 testing. This preschool group had had a full year's instruction and demonstrated excellent skills upon entry into kindergarten. We did not get the results we expected, largely, I believe, because of two new bilingual teachers we employed who unfortunately had little concept of teaching a class, let alone a bilingual one (each has since departed from the teaching profession). May 1984 testing presented us the upturn we had been expecting since the excellent School Readiness Inventory (SRI) results of the Canalino Title VII preschool had begun to be achieved. One notes a sharp incline in the tables and graph.

In May 1985, we see another sharp incline. The results of this 1984-85 year are fantastic. They were achieved, I believe, because we extended the methods of the Canalino Title VII preschool to the kindergarten program itself. Before this year we had used the traditional transitional bilingual classroom approach in kindergarten. Also, as demonstrated with the Canalino Title VII preschool in previous years, English language development continued to develop for the kindergarten class of 1984-85, despite the extensive use of Spanish as the instructional medium of the students. Of particular interest with this group, too, is that the entry level scores are extremely low on the Bilingual Syntax Measure - English (BSM). Remember, that the preschool was in transition during the 1983-84 year becoming a State preschool program in the middle of the year. The Canalino State Preschool operated for only 5 months and served only a few LEP children in the transition period. Most LEP children were in another preschool program or in none at all and the English BSM entry scores in kindergarten for the 1984-85 school year took a nose-dive. Perhaps this is evidence that the home language approach of the Canalino Title VII preschool had, in fact, enhanced the English language development of those students. By the end of the kindergarten year, however, the BSM English scores are healthy using the preschool approach in a kindergarten classroom.

The first grade scores also show a sharp steady incline since the inception of the Canalino Title VII preschool. The May 1985 results are tremendous. 93% of the LEP students scored on or above the 50th percentile on the CTBS Espanol reading test. Also, 97% of LEPs completed both the Cascabel and Trampolin readers of the Santillana reading series. Previous to this, the best we had ever done at the Early Childhood Learning Center (Canalino School) was 40% of the LEP students completing both of these readers in first grade. Unfortunately, I do not have English language updates for the students past first grade or even for the current group of first graders. Our district has cut back severely on bilingual assessments except in those areas which I have personally monitored in the interest of the work we have pioneered at our school. I can state that the three bilingual teachers at the first grade level report that this is the most proficient English speaking group of LEP first graders they have ever worked with. Most are considered to be FEP by now. We also have videotaped some of them using English for a film we are developing.

CANALINO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
AND
EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTER

FIRST GRADE CALIFORNIA ACHIEVEMENT TEST (CAT) MATH RESULTS
FOR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT (LEP) STUDENTS IN
THE CARPINTERIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

FIRST GRADE MATH

Year	Number of Students	Percentile Rank	Percent Scoring On Or Above 50th%ile
5/85	41	54th%ile	76%
5/84	(California Achievement Test Not Used)		
5/83	36	51st%ile	56%
5/82			
5/81	35	43rd%ile	51%

FIRST GRADE CALIFORNIA ACHIEVEMENT TEST MATH

Students Scoring Above The 50th%ile

CANALINO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
AND
EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTER

KINDERGARTEN CALIFORNIA ACHIEVEMENT TEST (CAT) RESULTS
FOR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT (LEP) STUDENTS
IN THE CARPINTERIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

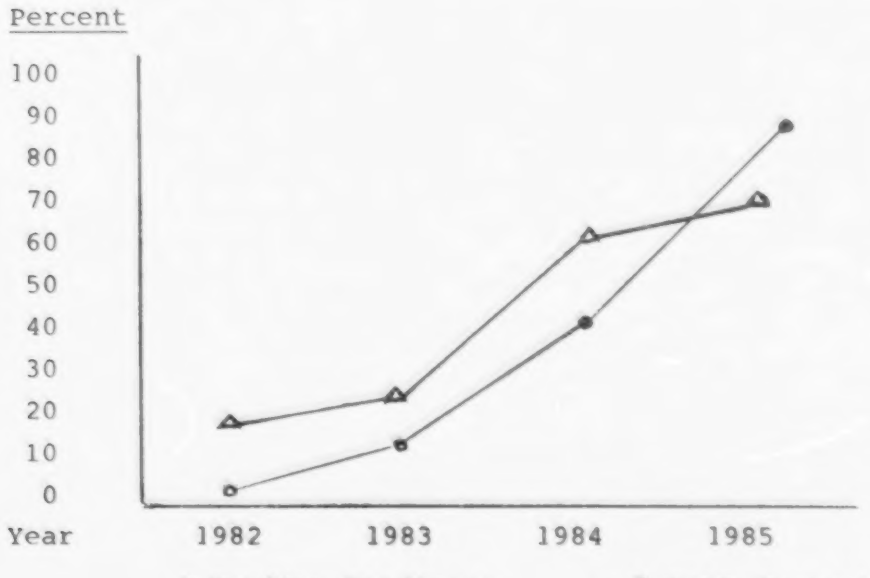
KINDERGARTEN READING READINESS

Year	Number Of Students	Percentile Rank	Percent Scoring On Or Above 50th%ile
5/85	37	68th%ile	89%
5/84	35	34th%ile	40%
5/83	39	10th%ile	13%
5/82	36	8th%ile	0%

KINDERGARTEN MATH CONCEPTS

Year	Number Of Students	Percentile Rank	Percent Scoring On Or Above 50th%ile
5/85	37	71st%ile	76%
5/84	36	60th%ile	61%
5/83	39	25th%ile	23%
5/82	37	25th%ile	19%

KINDERGARTEN CALIFORNIA ACHIEVEMENT TEST
LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS SCORING ABOVE THE 50TH%ILE



KINDERGARTEN BSM SCORES 1984-85 FALL AND SPRING

STUDENT	Fall	Spring
#10	3	5
#11	3	4
#12	1	4
#13	3	4
#14	3	4
#15	4	4
#16	3	4
#17	3	4
#18	1	4
#19	2	4
#20	1	4
#21	1	4
#22	1	3
#23	2	3
#24	1	3
#25	1	3
#26	1	3
#27	1	3
#28	3	3
#29	1	3
#30	1	3
#31	1	3
#32	1	3
#33	1	3
#34	2	3
#35	1	3

STUDENT	Fall	Spring
#36	1	2
#37	1	2
#38	1	2
#39	1	2
#40	1	2
#41	1	2
#42	1	2
#43	1	1
#44	1	1

BSM FALL 1984

	#	%
Level 5	0	0
Level 4	1	3%
Level 3	7	20%
Level 2	3	8%
Level 1	24	69%

BSM SPRING 1985

	#	%
Level 5	1	3%
Level 4	11	31%
Level 3	14	40%
Level 2	7	20%
Level 1	2	6%

Level 5 Proficient English
Level 4 Intermediate English
Level 3 Survival English
Level 2 Receptive English
Level 1 No English

Number of Students Advancing

3 Levels: 4
2 Levels: 13
1 Level : 14
0 Level : 4

Number of Students Declining: -0-

CANALINO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
AND
EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTER

FIRST GRADE CALIFORNIA TEST OF BASIC SKILLS (CTBS) ESPANOL
READING RESULTS FOR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT (LEP)
STUDENTS IN THE CARPINTERIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

FIRST GRADE READING

Year	Number Of Students	Percentile Rank	Percent Scoring On or Above 50%ile
5/85	41	64th%ile	93%
5/84	30	61st%ile	76%
5/83	38	58th%ile	66%
5/82	29	59th%ile	76%
5/81	34	7th%ile	0%

FIRST GRADE CALIFORNIA TEST OF BASIC SKILLS ESPANOL READING

Students Scoring Above The 50th%ile